MEETING OF THE HOUSTON/GALVESTON NAVIGATION SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
September 12, 2000

On the call of its sponsor, Rear Admiral Paul J. Pluta, USCG, Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District, and after public notice in the Federal Register (Notice of Meetings, 65 Fed. Reg. 43400, July 13, 2000), the fifty-eighth meeting of the Houston/Galveston Navigation Safety Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, September 12, 2000. The meeting was held in the conference room of the Corps of Engineers Galveston District Office building in Galveston, Texas. The published agenda for the meeting is included as enclosure (1). A list of attendees is attached as enclosure (2). The documents which were made available to and/or prepared by the Committee are available for public inspection and copying at the office of the Committee's Executive Secretary, CDR Peter S. Simons, USCG, at U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service Houston/Galveston, 9640 Clinton Drive, Houston, TX 77029. Documents are also available electronically through the Committee's website (www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/advisory/hogansac/hogan.htm). A verbatim recording of the meeting is available upon request. Requests for copies of the recording must be received by September 30, 2002.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Tim Leitzell at 9:00 AM.

OPENING REMARKS BY COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Captain Wayne Gusman welcomed members and guests. He welcomed Rear Admiral Paul Pluta, Commander Eighth Coast Guard District and Sponsor of the Committee. Captain Gusman conveyed the Committee's appreciation for Rear Admiral Pluta's attendance, given the Admiral's extensive responsibilities and commitments. (The Eighth Coast Guard District covers part or all of twenty-six states.) Captain Gusman noted that this meeting was the first time in five years that the Committee had met in Galveston. Captain Gusman then introduced Rear Admiral Pluta.

OPENING REMARKS BY COMMITTEE SPONSOR

Rear Admiral Pluta noted that he had recently attended the National Conference of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. He singled out the Auxiliary for the tremendous operational support they provide the Coast Guard. He indicated that the Commandant of the Coast Guard had established two new Commandant directions for the Coast Guard (for his last two years in office): restoring service readiness and shaping the Coast Guard's future (so that the service is postured to meet the challenges of the future).

Rear Admiral Pluta noted that his trip to Galveston was a busy one. After the HOGANSAC meeting he will be meeting w/ Dr. Herndon, Shriners' Hospital, regarding the Coast Guard's participation in the medical evacuation of a burn victim from Honduras to Shriners' Hospital. He'll then meet with the winner of the Yahoo.com Fantasy Career Contest. Group Galveston is hosting the winner of the entrant in the Coast Guard category. He'll then visit the local chapter of the Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers' Association. The local chapter has won "best chapter" honors from the national association in recognition of their service to the Coast Guard and the surrounding community.

Rear Admiral Pluta thanked the Committee Chairman for bringing the Committee to Galveston. He briefly reviewed the ambitious agenda for the Committee meeting and indicated that he was also prepared to discuss the Coast Guard-Texas General Land Office joint initiative regarding vessel inspections and boardings. He noted that the issue of recreational boater's safety and recreational boaters' interactions with commercial traffic was an important topic in many areas of his district, including along the inland waterways.

Rear Admiral Pluta then noted some of the challenges for the Committee. He asked for the Committee's continuing help in addressing the issue of damage to aids to navigation along the Houston Ship Channel.

Rear Admiral Pluta also summarized the progress to date on the Department of Transportation's Marine Transportation System initiative. He noted that a regional group would meet at the National Waterways Conference in St. Louis later in the month to discuss regional issues and continue the process of implementing MTS at the regional and local level. He welcomed all with interest in the matter to attend the upcoming conference.

Before turning the meeting over to the Committee Chair, Admiral Pluta noted that the incoming chair of the Lower Mississippi River Safety Advisory Committee had begun a strategic initiative to examine the issues confronting that committee. He encouraged Chairman Leitzell to participate in that initiative if his schedule permitted.

Finally, Rear Admiral Pluta introduced Captain Don Thompson, Commander, Coast Guard Group Galveston, noting that Captain Thompson had taken command of the Group earlier this summer.

OPENING REMARKS BY COMMITTEE CHAIR

Chairman Leitzell welcomed Committee members and guests. Citing the length of the Committee's agenda he dispensed with the normal introductions of Committee members and asked that Committee members make their reports as succinct as possible.

A roster of Committee members was distributed and is included as enclosure (3).

APPROVAL OF MAY 24, 2000 MINUTES

A motion was made and seconded to approve the previous meeting's minutes. (Minutes, without enclosures, of the previous meeting are included as enclosure (4).)

OLD BUSINESS

Dredging projects.

Larry Miller introduced Johnny Rozsypal to update the Committee on the status of maintenance dredging and Dalton Krueger to discuss the status of dredging operations along the Houston Ship Channel.

Mr. Rozsypal noted that only one company was doing maintenance dredging. The operation, in the vicinity of the turning basin, will be completed in approximately one month.

Mr. Krueger then briefed the Committee on dredging operations related to the deepening and widening project. Dredging work is complete from the Bolivar Roads area out to the seaward limit of the entrance channel extension. The Lower Bay (Bolivar Roads to Red Fish) dredging contract is also complete. The Mid-Bay contract is to be awarded next year. The Corps is in the process of completing designs and specifications for that contract. The Upper Bay contract, awarded to Weeks Marine, is presently ongoing. The dredging is approximately 44% complete. Contractors have created approximately 24,000 feet of levee (without final shaping). Approximately one-third of the material to be dredged has been removed. Progress was slowed somewhat when the dredge encountered sandstone in the channel. The Corps is working to modify the contract to cover the additional costs associated with removal of the sandstone. The Oyster Reef Pad contract is essentially complete, with the last pad having been constructed on July 27th of this year. An experimental pad, with reduced thickness, was completed on July 31st. The health of this pad will be studied periodically. The Lower Bayou contract (Morgan's Point to Alexander Island) is approximately 17% complete. Mechanical work on the levees at Spillman and Alexander islands is complete. The dredge MERIDIAN is removing an average of 30,000 cubic yards per day of material. The Mid-Bayou contract, also known as the Goat Island contract, is scheduled to be awarded next year. The final contract, the Upper Bayou contract is behind schedule but is now 70% complete. Currently, dredging work is to be completed along this section of the channel during the January 2001 timeframe.

Mr. Krueger noted that there is one additional dredging project, for work in the Port of Galveston area. The Port of Galveston has not provided matching funds for the project so the Corps has not moved forward with work on that contract.

Mr. Miller provided some amplifying information on dredging operations along the Houston Ship Channel. He noted that the Upper Bay contract (Weeks Marine) also includes an option to dredge the Bayport flare. That dredging will tentatively take place between March and May of next year. The Lower Bayou contract (Bean/Stuyvesant) includes an option to dredge Barbour's Cut. There are also plans to install a new tanker dock at Houston Fuel Oils. That project will necessitate dredging. Oiltanking also has plans to build a new ship dock and dredging will be done in conjunction with the construction. Trans Global Solutions has applied for a permit to build a bulk materials handling plant in the vicinity of the Highway 8 bridge. Mr. Miller noted that Brown & Root Energy Services has a large oil rig module that will transit out to sea later this year. Approximately 6,000 cubic yards of material will have to be dredged in preparation for this move. Finally, Sims Bayou will be widened and deepened as part of a Harris County flood control project. That will begin four to five months after the Sims Turning Basin dredging project, currently scheduled for the end of this month, is completed.

The Port of Houston Authority is in the process of acquiring property to build a new dredge site east of the Highway 8 bridge on the north side of the channel. The site should be ready to accept dredge spoils by the end of calendar year 2002. In the interim, the Port faces a severe shortage of dredge spoils disposal sites- neither the East/West Jones site nor the Greens Bayou property is available for placement of dredge material.

In the interim, the Port is actively working with the Corps to extend the useful life of existing dredge sites. That effort, set forth in a dredge materials management plan, will require certain procedural changes on the part of dredging companies using Port-owned sites (increased settling of pumped material to facilitate water runoff, and use of sites based on capacity rather than geographic convenience, for example).

Captain Morris noted that there are still sections of the channel in the area of the Lower Bay contract that have not been dredged. Mr. Krueger confirmed that there is a section of the channel in the vicinity of Lights 41 & 42 that has not been dredged (available depth is 40') and that the new channel was dredged only up to a point 1600' below Lights 51 & 52. Captain Morris noted that these two undredged areas effectively limit the usefulness of the new channel since deeply-laden vessels cannot safely meet in the newly dredged section of the channel until the project is truly complete.

Captain Morris also noted that the Houston Pilots were concerned about the presence of the dredge R.S. WEEKS. The WEEKS began work without any notification that it would be dredging and in apparent conflict with a representation (when the deepening and widening project began) that there would only be one dredge per reach or VTS reporting zone. Captain Morris noted that the concentration of dredges between Atkinson Island and the Fred Hartman Bridge made it difficult for marine traffic to meet in the area, particularly with the speed and passing arrangement restrictions in place. He also was concerned that an unused pipeline remains in the vicinity of Lights 83 & 84, unnecessarily restricting the usable width of the channel because of the manner in which the pipeline was established (buried only in the toe of the channel). Captain Morris indicated that the Houston Pilots would like to have the WEEKS removed until the GEORGE D. WILLIAMS (just upstream of the WEEKS) completes her work. The Houston Pilots also want the pipeline removed.

Mr. Miller noted that there had been a meeting on September 5th organized by the Vessel Traffic Service to discuss dredge operations along the ship channel. Mr. Miller noted that the speed restrictions were necessary to minimize damage to dredge company equipment (both aboard the dredges and on the booster barges stationed along the discharge pipeline).

Commander Simons noted that, as a result of the September 5th meeting, VTS had modified its recommendations for traffic in the area of the dredging operations. The current policy is that ship traffic proceeds at a slow bell from Five Mile to the Fred Hartman Bridge. In addition, there is a no meeting or overtaking recommendation in place for all traffic (ship and tug) in the vicinity of the R. S. WEEKS. Commander Simons noted that the R. S. WEEKS has requested a channel closure (for Wednesday, September 13) to remove the unused pipeline at Lights 83 & 84. Finally, he noted that preliminary indications are that the WEEKS is being cooperative in yielding to passing traffic by moving fully to the side of the channel to allow large vessels sufficient room to pass safely.

Barge lanes.

Mr. Jackson summarized the present status of Congressional action to authorize construction of barge lanes along the Houston Ship Channel. Mr. Jackson indicated that the Port continues to work to ensure that authorization language is included in the Fiscal Year 2001 Energy and

Water Development Appropriations Act. House Resolution 4733, the Energy & Water Development Appropriations Act, passed in the House and Senate. The Bill, which must go to conference committee, does not include language authorizing or appropriating money for construction of barge lanes. The Port hopes to insert the appropriate language into the bill during conference committee deliberations.

Senate Bill 2796, passed out of committee, is on the Senate floor. That bill contains language authorizing the Secretary of the Army to design and construct barge lanes to a depth of twelve feet "on both sides of the Houston Ship Channel from Red Fish Reef to Morgan's Point" at a total cost of $34,000,000. To date, there has been no action by the full Senate on the bill.

Mr. Jackson noted that the Port remains hopeful that the necessary authorization and appropriations language will be inserted into one or more of the pending bills so that funds for barge lane construction will be available in Fiscal Year 2001.

In response to a question from Captain Morris, Mr. Krueger noted that the Corps believes it has authority to proceed with design and specifications work for the barge lanes project. The Galveston District staff is moving forward with that effort. However, the Corps does not believe that it has the authority to award a contract for construction of the barge lanes until specifically authorized (and funded) by Congress.

Chairman Leitzell noted that the Committee has long been interested in barge lanes. The Committee sees barge lanes as an immensely important safety issue because they separate slow-moving traffic from faster-moving ships and allow the ship channel to be used safely and efficiently.

Electronic navigation.

Mr. Miller noted that the next meeting of the Houston Electronic Navigation Committee would be Friday, October 6 at 2:00 PM in the conference room of the Houston Pilots building.

Captain Morris noted that the Houston Pilots continue to work with four vendors (Hydrographic Associates, ARINC, Star Link and Ross Engineering). He indicated that, with the extension of the ship channel into the Gulf of Mexico in conjunction with the deepening and widening project, there is increased interest among members of the Houston Pilots Association in electronic navigation. However, the principal obstacle currently is cost. The Pilots are looking for a way to fund acquisition of carry aboard units but no funding source has yet been identified.

AtoN Knockdown Working Group.

Ms. Teichman reported that the Texas Waterway Operators Association will meet later in the day to discuss adoption of a voluntary report form developed by the working group. The form was developed to collect data on a variety of causal factors so that the working group can further analyze the problem of AtoN knockdowns and make recommendations to the Committee.

Ms. Teichman also reported that a subcommittee of TWOA members will meet with representatives from the Houston Pilots to discuss changes to aids to navigation along the upper section of the Houston Ship Channel.

Ms. Teichman noted that addressing ways of reducing the incidence of AtoN knockdown remain a high priority for TWOA and the Committee's working group.

Facility Mooring Depth Survey Project.

CDR Simons reported on the progress of the mooring depth survey project. The Committee's working group met in June to conduct a quality-control analysis of the data received from facilities responding to the Committee's initial survey and review the list of surveyed facilities. The working group also decided on a format for publishing information furnished by the facilities and discussed the procedures for keeping the information current.

CDR Simons provided draft copies of an excerpt from the Facility Mooring Depth Guide to be published by the Committee. A copy of the draft is included as enclosure (5) to these minutes. The draft includes a definitions section (added in response to Ms. Roof's suggestion at the August 22nd working group meeting), chartlets identifying the specific location of each facility (included at the suggestion of Captain Morris) and an index in which facilities are cross-referenced by their current and common names (where appropriate). The working group has received responses from all major facilities along the Houston Ship Channel. Personnel at the Vessel Traffic Service are compiling the data into an electronic format to facilitate printing. Plans are to have the book ready for printing not later than October 23rd.

Chairman Leitzell encouraged those with feedback regarding the project to forward their comments to the working group as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS

Seamen's Church Institute presentation on the Center for Maritime Education

Eric Larsson, the Executive Officer of the Center for Maritime Education at the Seamen's Church Institute, briefed the Committee on the Center's plans for the Center for Maritime Education – Gulf Region.

Captain Larsson began with a brief overview of the history of the Seamen's Church Institute. The Center for Maritime Education is one of three principal divisions of the Institute. The Center operates facilities in three locations: New York, Port Newark, New Jersey and Paducah, Kentucky. The Center's history dates to 1899.

Captain Larsson noted that all of the Center's instructors are licensed officers and have additional certification or degrees in education. The Center employs up-to-date simulation technology and endeavors to tailor courses to meet the corporate culture and operational procedures of the companies that send trainees to its courses.

Captain Larsson described the Center's Paducah facility, noting that the Houston building will include many of the same features. For example, the Paducah facility has both visual and non-visual fully equipped "wheelhouses." The two visual wheelhouses have a 230° field of view forward and a 40° field of view aft. They feature the same type of equipment found on the bridge of a towboat or ship and are equipped with

sound and vibration-producing equipment to increase the sense of realism for the mariner. The instructor has the ability to control a myriad of factors (e.g., river stage, current, wind, equipment malfunctions) to increase the realism of the simulation exercise. Captain Larsson noted that the Center creates its own scenic databases using a process called photo-texturing that uses digital photos as a basis for the visual displays. The Center is developing scenic databases for the Houston/Galveston area.

The Center, which will be located adjacent to the Port of Houston Authority building, is 17,000 square feet in size. The Center is expected to be open during the first quarter of next year. It will have four visual bridges and will be capable of training inland, coastal and deep-draft mariners. Five new visual databases, together with three existing databases, will enable the Center to model a number of Houston-specific vessel navigation scenarios. The areas modeled will cover the channel from the Galveston sea buoy to a point one-mile upstream of the Lynchburg ferry landing. The Center will also model other areas in the Gulf, including Port Arthur, Rainbow Bridge, the Neches Canal, Colorado Locks and New Orleans, among other locations. The Gulf Region Center will employ five hydrodynamic ship models and three towboat models.

There are already extensive training commitments for the Center. Thanks to the interest of nine companies in the Houston area, the Center has already filled thirty-five weeks of training annually for the next five years. The Center anticipates that it will shortly have forty-two weeks of training commitments.

Captain Larsson noted that the Center welcomed participation from all members of the public and private sector including the Vessel Traffic Service, local pilot associations, owners and operators of deep-sea vessels, barges and supply vessels.

Captain Brumley asked who would be validating the model scenarios. Captain Larsson indicated that extensive research has been conducted to make the navigation scenarios as realistic as possible. Scenarios are updated as each group completes the training, based on the comments of the mariners who use the waterway being modeled.

A copy of Captain Larsson’s powerpoint presentation is included as enclosure (6).

NOAA presentation on Electronic Navigation Charts for the Houston/Galveston Area

Captain Nick Perugini, Chief, Marine Division, Office of Coast Survey, National Ocean Service, briefed the Committee on NOAA’s electronic navigation chart initiative.

NOAA’s nautical charting mission is threefold: produce, maintain and distribute a suite of nautical charts; collect hydrographic data to support production of nautical charts; and produce charts in a paper and electronic format. NOAA’s electronic charts are available in raster or vector format.

An electronic navigation chart is an electronic presentation of graphical chart features. There are two formats: raster and vector. Raster charts are very popular. Raster charts are merely scanned copies of paper

charts. Although raster charts are easy to produce, a computer cannot manipulate the data on them. The data is read as a single feature by the computer displaying it and cannot be customized to meet the needs of an individual mariner. The data is "dumb," if you will. Vector charts, on the other hand, consist of an electronic database of chart features. For example, the database for a buoy would have the aid's color and characteristic. Vector charts consist of a number of databases (e.g., aids to navigation, bathymetrics and topographical features) which can be tailored. Thus, a vector chart enables the mariner to highlight or remove certain features. NOAA's vector chart suite is being produced using the International Hydrographic Organization S-57 standard. This enables any S-57 compliant chart system to read and display any S-57 compliant chart, regardless of the system manufacturer or chart maker.

Captain Perugini noted that there are two types of electronic charting systems: ECS and ECDIS. An electronic chart system, or ECS, is a generic term that covers a broad range of systems (including systems that use raster charts and ECDIS equipment). An electronic chart display and information system, or ECDIS, uses electronic navigation charts and electronic positioning information to provide an integrated navigation tool.

A principal advantage of a vector-format ENC is that the user can customize the databases to present a tailorable, useful display. Features can be turned on or off and adjusted to meet particular operating conditions. For example, a mariner could highlight depths within a particular range to determine avoidance areas for the ship she was navigating.

NOAA's initial approach to developing vector-format ENCs was to focus on the commercial shipping community since that segment of the marine transportation system was seen as the presenting the most immediate need for ENC capability. Thus, the initial suite of vector-format ENCs will be limited to forty major commercial ports, although coverage will eventually be expanded to encompass the entire United States. NOAA is close to completing its suite for the Galveston, Houston and Texas City areas.

Producing vector-format ENCs presents unique challenges. One such issue is merging data from the Coast Guard (on aids to navigation, for example) with data available from the Corps of Engineers (channel soundings). The databases are built with highly detailed data, thereby creating a highly accurate navigation chart. Where discrepancies exist between information furnished by two different providers (for example, aid position information which does not correspond with the reported dimensions of a navigation channel) NOAA cartographers work with the providers to resolve the discrepancy.

Captain Perugini noted that NOAA's vector-format ENC suite for the Houston/Galveston area was in the process of being updated. Next month, a Navigation Response Team will begin verifying high-resolution aerial photography work as part of an effort to ensure that the charts accurately depict the latest available information on channel dimensions, aids to navigation and geographic configurations.

One of the principal advantages of electronic charts is the ability to frequently update displayed information. Raster charts are updated

weekly via e-mail. Vector-format ENCs will be updated on a similar basis.

Captain Perugini noted that the Houston vector-format ENC is available, for development and testing, through Maptech, NOAA's partner in distributing ENCs. Prototype vector-format ENCs are also available for other areas, including the lower Mississippi River and Tampa Bay regions. Currently, NOAA has completed sixty-five ENC cells with plans to complete an additional seventy cells during the next fiscal year. This means that charts for the forty major ports in the United States will be available in a vector-format ENC by the end of next year. Captain Perugini noted that most of the cells in the Houston/Galveston area are complete. He specifically noted that charts 11323, 11324, 11325, 11327, 11328 and 11329 will be available in vector format.

Data for the Houston vector-format ENC suite comes from a variety of sources. For example, shoreline information comes from high-resolution photographs, blueprints and survey data compiled for the existing paper chart collection. Aids to navigation information comes from positions provided by the Coast Guard. Obstruction and wreck information is based on hydrographic surveys or, where survey information is unavailable, from digitizing representations on the existing paper charts.

Maptech is the sole distributor, at least for the next year, for NOAA ENCs. Vector charts are available as an interim product as each paper chart is converted. When an entire area is complete the suite of ENCs covering that area will be made available in a "Professional CD" format. Captain Perugini estimated that a single vector-format ENC would cost approximately $20 ($50 if the mariner wanted to subscribe to a full year of electronic updates). He noted that Maptech currently charges $495 for its Professional CD product, which includes approximately 60 raster charts. As vector charts become available, Maptech will add those to its CD.

Finally, Captain Perugini noted that NOAA welcomes feedback from users of the charts. The vector format of the current charting efforts makes it particularly convenient to incorporate updates based on user comments.

Captain Morris noted that the Houston Pilots had recently paid for aerial photographs of the Houston Ship Channel and that they would be willing to make those available to NOAA as part of its data verification efforts. He asked whether vector charts available from other vendors (Seven Cs and OSL, specifically) will have the same resolution and accuracy as charts available from Maptech. Captain Perugini noted that there are two types of electronic charts: official charts, which are only available through Maptech (or, from a company that has purchased the charts from Maptech) and unofficial charts, which are produced by scanning paper charts. Only official charts are guaranteed to have the published resolution and accuracy.

A copy of Captain Perugini's powerpoint presentation is included as enclosure (7).

Rules of the Road Knowledge Requirement for Recreational Boaters

Mr. Gene Schwantes, Windward SeaVenture Enterprises, Inc., asked the Committee to recommend a rules of the road knowledge requirement for recreational boaters. He cited several instances in which a recreational

boater's apparent unfamiliarity with the rules resulted in a near casualty. Mr. Schwantes distributed a point paper, entitled "Educational Achievements for Boaters on Galveston Bay," for review by the Committee. The paper is included as enclosure (8).

Chairman Leitzell noted his agreement with Mr. Schwantes' principal observation that education is critical to safety on the waterway. Chairman Leitzell promised to review the point paper and work with Mr. Schwantes on his proposal.

Captain Gusman noted that the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators was currently meeting and that a member of Rear Admiral Pluta's staff was participating in that meeting. He suggested that HOGANSAC's approach should be to link with that group to see what efforts they are pursuing. He indicated that his staff could provide case histories on a number of incidents that might positively influence the direction of that group in encouraging states to move forward with education and/or licensing requirements for recreational boaters.

Rear Admiral Pluta indicated that, at its national conference, the Coast Guard Auxiliary signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Power Squadron to synchronize those two groups' educational outreach efforts. He noted the fundamental issue here is convincing the states to license recreational boaters who operate within their waters, much as they issue licenses for drivers of vehicles. He offered the services of his staff in providing information and statistics on incidents in Texas that might help in convincing the state legislature to take action on a boat operator licensing or education requirement.

Mr. Schwantes indicated that his experience is that boat dealers oppose licensing requirements. Rear Admiral Pluta noted that the Coast Guard has partnered with the National Marine Dealers Association. He understands that some members of the association give credit to purchasers who subsequently complete a boater education course.

Captain Larsson noted that some insurance companies offer policy discounts to recreational boaters who complete certified boater education courses such as those offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Captain Morris described an outreach program in the San Francisco Bay area in which members of the local pilot organization and towboat companies made visits to local yacht clubs. He suggested that local industry members would be similarly disposed if there was an expression of interest on the part of the recreational boating community.

TNRCC Clean Air Rules and Plans for Houston/Galveston

Chairman Leitzell noted that Ms. Husted had prepared a summary of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission's proposed regulations under the state implementation plan for the Houston/Galveston area. A copy of the summary is included as enclosure (9).

Ms. Husted also prepared a letter for the Chairman's signature. CDR Simons summarized the principal provisions of the letter for those who did not have a copy available to review. A copy of the letter is attached as enclosure (10).

Rear Admiral Pluta clarified the intent of the letter (i.e., that its purpose was to ask him to provide his comments on the rulemaking as it relates to navigation safety along the Houston Ship Channel).

Mr. Jackson asked that Committee members be afforded the opportunity to review the proposed letter and have their staffs comment on it before the Chairman signs the letter on behalf of the Committee.

Chairman Leitzell asked that members of the Committee review the proposed draft and provide any comments to him within a week. If there are no objections from members of the Committee he will then sign the letter.

Website Developments

CDR Simons reported that the Committee had a website (managed by Coast Guard Headquarters). He has submitted updates to the website. The site includes information on Committee membership, minutes from previous meetings and details on how to apply for appointment to the Committee. Beginning with minutes for the September 2000 meeting, the website will also include copies of all handouts provided at each meeting. The Committee's website address is . . .

www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/advisory/hogansac/hogan.htm

CDR Simons also noted that the Vessel Traffic Service's website is operational. Information on the VTS may be found at . . .

www.uscg.mil/d8/vts/houston-galveston/Index/welcome.htm

Pilotage Issues Affected by the FPSO System

Captain Morris noted that there is a proposal to use integrated tug and barge (ITBs) or articulated tug and barge (ATBs) assemblies to lighter drilling operations in the Gulf. Federal law does not require a state pilot on these shuttle tankers. Thus, Federal pilots (who can qualify with as few as twelve round trips on the channel) may potentially be used to bring the shuttle tankers into ports along Galveston Bay. The Houston Pilots believe that this poses an unreasonable safety risk, given the volume of cargo likely to be carried on these vessels. Captain Morris suggested that the Committee should recommend that state pilots be used on all such shuttle operations.

Chairman Leitzell asked if the Houston Pilots were aware of any safety data that might be cited in support of their position. Captain Morris replied that they were not.

Ms. Clark noted, by way of background, that the Minerals Management Service has developed a draft environmental impact statement that proposes the use of floating production storage and offloading systems (FPSOs) to facilitate the lease, exploration and development of deepwater areas in the Gulf of Mexico. Shuttle tankers would be used to transfer crude between the FPSOs and a refinery. She indicated that no one has really tested the utility of an ITB or ATB in such an operation. However, the Minerals Management Service has scheduled public hearings in several locations, including one to be held here in Houston (at the Radisson Hotel, Gulf Freeway on Wednesday, September 20, 2000).

Chairman Leitzell asked that Captain Morris be responsible for following this issue on behalf of the Committee.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the full Committee will be held in the Boardroom of the Port of Houston Authority on Thursday, January 25, 2001. The meeting will begin at 9:00 AM. The Port building is located at 111 East Loop North.

The Committee's working groups will meet on Thursday, January 11, 2001 at the offices of the Galveston/Texas City Pilots. The meetings will begin at 9:00 AM. The Galveston/Texas City Pilots office is located at 1301 Pelican Island No. 2. (Individuals interested in attending the January meeting who are not familiar with the location of the office may wish to call (409) 740-3336 for directions.)

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 PM.

WAYNE D. GUSMAN
Executive Director

Certified: TIMOTHY R. LEITZELL
Committee Chair

Encl: (1) Published Agenda
(2) List of Members and Guests in Attendance
(3) HOGANSAC Member Roster
(4) Minutes of the May 24, 2000 HOGANSAC Meeting
(5) Draft Copy of Facility Mooring Depth Guide for the Ports of Galveston, Houston and Texas City
(6) Powerpoint presentation on the Seamen's Church Institute's Center for Maritime Education- Gulf Region
(7) Powerpoint presentation on NOAA's Electronic Navigational Chart Initiative
(8) Educational Achievements for Boaters on Galveston Bay point paper
(9) Summary of TNRCC Proposed Regulations Under the SIP for Houston/Galveston Nonattainment Area
(10) Draft HOGANSAC letter on the TNRCC Proposed Regulations Potentially Impacting Navigation Issues in the Houston/Galveston Nonattainment Area